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Friday, December 19, 2025

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 103



From the [NY Times](#): *Harvard officials have opened a secret disciplinary investigation into at least two students for their roles in drawing scrutiny to the relationship between the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and the school's former president, Larry Summers, according to three people briefed on the matter. The students posted videos online showing Mr. Summers addressing students in a Harvard lecture hall about his connections to Mr. Epstein last month, and took credit for pressuring him to step away from teaching after the disclosures. The investigation includes an examination of whether the students — who publicly criticized Mr. Summers — violated a series of rules, including attending a class they*

were not enrolled in, the three people said.

The students are facing potential discipline that could range from a private reprimand to being required to withdraw from the school, according to the two people. It is against Harvard's rules for students to attend classes they are not enrolled in. And it is also against the rules to record classes without consent or publicize those recordings...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/17/us/harvard-investigates-students-larry-summers-video-epstein.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:10 AM](#) No comments:

Labels: [Harvard](#)

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Going Up

From time to time, we have noted the growth of Medicare Advantage plans that now cover more than half of the Medicare population in the US. As blog readers will know, at one point UCOP contemplated shifting the entire retiree health insurance population at UC into such a plan. After a protest, Medicare Advantage instead became a lower-cost option for retirees. Many experts have suggested that the growth in Medicare Advantage plans and there seeming cheapness was due in part to overpayment from the feds. Congress was aware of this issue, but seemed uninterested in doing anything about it.

That indifference may now shift. Republicans in Congress keep talking about replacing "Obamacare," but can't seem to produce an alternative. With subsidies for such plans expiring, there is now more focus on the problem of rising health insurance costs. The irony is that if the overpayment



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by the feds is checked, the cost to consumers of Medicare Advantage plans is likely to rise. UC's Medicare Advantage offerings - because they are group - have somewhat different regulations than individual plans. But the logic is the same: if the overpayment is reduced, premiums will rise.

From the [NY Times](#) ...*The growth of Medicare Advantage plans — which now account for more than half of total enrollment — plays a role as well. These privately offered alternatives to government-run traditional Medicare often reduce upfront costs by including prescription drug coverage. They also include out-of-pocket caps (\$5,320 this year) without the Medigap policies that provide that protection in traditional Medicare. That comes with trade-offs, including health care provider networks and frequent red-tape hassles with coverage approvals, known as prior authorizations.*

Medicare spends about \$80 billion more annually for Medicare Advantage enrollees than it would if they were enrolled in traditional Medicare, leading to higher spending for both Part A (which covers hospitalization) and Part B.

The higher spending contributes to higher Part B premiums that are paid by beneficiaries in both traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/22/business/medicare-part-b-premium-2026.html>.

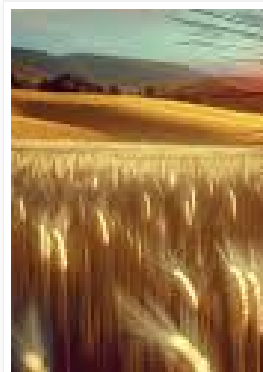
We have also noted on this blog that UCLA created its own Medicare Advantage plan for residents of LA County (but not UC retirees eligible for UC retiree health insurance!). It, too, could be affected.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [health care](#), [politics](#), [UC](#), [UCLA](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 195

From [Inside Higher Ed](#): *As promised in a memo from the chancellor earlier this month, some Texas Tech University system faculty members were asked this week to report whether any course they teach “advocates for or promotes” specific race, gender or sexual identities. It is the latest step in a sweeping curricular review focused on limiting discussion of transgender identity, racism and sexuality across the five-campus public system. By 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 22, faculty members at Angelo State University must fill out a survey for each class they teach. In addition to the course title and reference number, the survey asks the following questions: “Does this course include any content that advocates for or promotes race- or sex-based prejudice, as defined in the Chancellor’s memorandum? Does this course include any content that recognizes or discusses more than two sexes (male and female), or addresses gender identity beyond what is recognized under state and federal law? Does this course include any content related to sexual orientation?”*



If a faculty member answers yes to any of those questions, they are then prompted to answer, “What is the course material required for? Check all that apply,” and select from the options “professional licensure/certification,” “accreditation,” “patient/client care” and “other.” Faculty must also provide a justification statement to support their response and are asked to “be as specific as possible.” Once faculty submit their responses, they will be compiled into spreadsheets by college, which department chairs and deans will review. They then must report the outcomes to the president and provost, Angelo State University provost Don Topliff said in an email to all faculty. “Faculty will be notified of outcomes after approval,” he wrote. It is unclear exactly what curricular changes the outcomes will prompt.

Faculty at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center received a similar email this week, a faculty member told Inside Higher Ed. But instead of filling out a survey, they are being asked to enter the same information directly into a spreadsheet...

Full story at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/curriculum/2025/12/11/texas-tech-gathers-info-race-gender-course-content>.

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From the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#): *When this fall’s new doctoral and master’s students were filling out their applications, there was little cause for concern about the near-term future of*

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graduate education. That's changed. President Trump's return to the White House in January brought a cascade of new policy changes, including widespread termination of the grants that fund many doctoral students' work and proposed caps on how much their institutions could be reimbursed for research. Visa-policy changes and an uncertain political climate made international students leery about continuing their education in the United States.

Those changes have triggered a destabilization of graduate-school enrollment for both master's and doctoral programs. Cash-strapped colleges are cutting down on the size of Ph.D. classes, which cost them money, and finding that new master's students, which broadly make them money, are harder to come by.

Available data doesn't yet capture the extent of the damage. This fall, graduate-program enrollment stayed steady, rising by just 0.1 percent, according to preliminary numbers from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. In fact, doctoral programs saw a 1.1-percent enrollment bump. But underlying that statistic is the fact that dozens of doctoral programs decided in the spring to enroll fewer students than usual, or to pause admissions entirely, for fear they might not be able to fund their usual cohorts.

Meanwhile, master's programs, which according to the Clearinghouse data accounted for nearly two-thirds of total graduate enrollment, experienced a 0.6-percent enrollment decline, with many programs reporting precipitous declines in their international-student populations.

The fall-2026 enrollment picture, though, is likely to paint a fuller picture. Doctoral programs will reckon with the impact of two consecutive years of reduced or canceled cohorts, while the elimination of the Grad PLUS student-loan program — slated for July 1 — will force some students to reconsider how they might fund their education.

The relative stability of the fall-2025 numbers, therefore, could engender a false sense of security. With the Trump administration wrapping up its first year in office, "fall 2026 will be a real barometer to the direction that we're going," says Chevelle Newsome, president of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)...

Full story at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/has-the-graduate-school-collapse-begun>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [academic freedom](#), [admissions](#), [Angelo State U](#), [enrollment](#), [politics](#), [Texas Tech U](#)

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 102



From the [Harvard Crimson](#): Harvard President Alan M. Garber '76 will continue to lead the University beyond June 30, 2027, after Harvard's governing boards agreed to extend his presidency for an indefinite period, according to a Monday announcement from Harvard Corporation Senior Fellow Penny S. Pritzker '81. The move delays a presidential search that had been expected to begin in 2026 and signals the governing boards' confidence in Garber's leadership as Harvard faces intensifying political pressure from the Trump administration and ongoing internal debates over campus climate and free expression.

Garber, who became president in August 2024 after serving as interim president, following former Harvard President Claudine Gay's resignation, had previously been slated to serve through the end of the 2026-27 academic year...

Full story at <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/12/16/garber-to-be-extended/>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:05 AM](#) No comments: 

Labels: [Harvard](#)

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Hey, it's only money - Part 3 (Thanks, but NIL thanks)

From [NBC Sports](#): ...Hall of Fame quarterback Troy Aikman went from UCLA to the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft, and after all the success he's had, he wanted to give back to the UCLA football

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program by contributing to a player getting money from the name, image and likeness fund. He now thinks that was a mistake...

"I gave money to a kid. I won't mention who," Aikman said. "I've done it one time at UCLA. Never met the young man. He was there a year, he left after the year. I wrote a sizable check, and he went to another school. I didn't even get so

much as a thank you note. It's one of those deals to where I'm done with NIL. I mean, I wanna see UCLA be successful, but I'm done with it." ...

Full story at <https://www.nbcsports.com/nfl/profootballtalk/rumor-mill/news/troy-aikman-says-hes-done-contributing-to-nil-after-a-ucla-player-took-his-money-and-left#>.

But then there is this from the [LA Times](#): Troy Aikman said he's "done with NIL" after writing a check to a UCLA football player who never thanked him and went on to leave for another school after one season. There was a reason for that lack of gratitude, according to one person familiar with the Bruins' football name, image and likeness operations from that time not authorized to discuss donor information publicly. The player in question didn't know who funded his NIL deal, only that it was coming from the team's collective, Men of Westwood. It was standard practice for players not to know which donors or alumni contributed NIL funds that were distributed to the team...

Aikman [also said] he believed that players should be able to leave one school for another amid coaching turnover but should have to otherwise stay with the program paying them. "There's got to be some leadership at the very top that kind of cleans all of this up," Aikman said. "Starting with players that accept money. There's got to be some accountability and responsibility on their behalf, to have to stick to a program." ...

Full story at <https://www.latimes.com/sports/ucla/story/2025-12-10/why-troy-aikman-didnt-get-thanked-by-that-ucla-football-player>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments:

Labels: [athletics](#), [UCLA](#)

It's hard to keep a good scandal down

Back last January, we noted that the Regents had for several years held closed-door meetings on the "Pension Administration Project," a mysterious topic title that appeared to involve a failed computer system project for pension administration.* Details were leaking out and appearing in popular news sources.

Now columnist Dan Walters seems to have stumbled on it:

From [CalMatters](#): The University of California is one of the world's most prestigious centers of higher education and cutting-edge medical, technological and social research. One assumes that its faculty and administrative cadre are saturated with extremely bright people. Nevertheless, UC has succumbed to a managerial disease that has afflicted other corners of state government — the chronic inability to successfully adopt information technology...

UC's attempt to upgrade its pension system echoes that experience. As described in an article by Politico, a website devoted to politics: "In April 2019, the University of California unveiled a new computer program that school officials promised would overhaul its clunky, outdated system for disbursing pension payments to more than 150,000 former employees.

"Glitches and bad data, however, marred the launch, delaying payments and causing other problems. Now, six years later, the university is still embroiled in a bitter legal fight with the contractors it hired to build the system, claiming the companies repeatedly misled and defrauded the university."

...Twelve years ago, UC officials awarded contracts to two companies, Sagitec Solutions and Linea Solutions, worth \$28 million to upgrade the pension system's outdated computer system. When the upgrade was tested a half-decade later, chaos erupted. Pension payments weren't



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delivered on time, pension calculations were riddled with errors, UC retirees pelted the system's administration with complaints, and the contractors and UC executives began pointing fingers of blame at each other.

...I once asked an acquaintance who sold computer software to state agencies why so many systems failed. He said bureaucrats often don't know what they want and are rarely conversant about tech capability, leading to misunderstandings about what will be done...

Full story at <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2025/12/university-california-pensions-technology/>.

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*<https://uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com/2025/01/a-clue-to-ongoing-mystery.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:25 AM No comments: 

Labels: [pensions](#), [UC](#), [uc retirement](#), [ucrp](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 194

The Classroom Experience at Columbia - Report #4: Task Force on Antisemitism

Introduction: Academic freedom must be guaranteed to everyone at Columbia, including members of protected classes (i.e., groups protected under antidiscrimination law). In listening sessions, the antisemitism task force heard of disturbing incidents in which the academic freedom of Jewish and Israeli Columbia students was not protected in the University's classrooms. We alluded to these incidents in our second report, published in August 2024 as part of our discussion of the listening sessions, and we promised to consider them more fully in a subsequent report. That is our purpose here.



We begin with our central point: We urge the University to protect freedom of expression to the maximum extent possible while also complying with antidiscrimination laws. Censorship has no place at Columbia. Neither does discrimination. We will describe a range of policies that can protect free expression while averting discrimination. In balancing these goals, we would err in the direction of protecting free expression, even when it makes members of our community uncomfortable. Importantly, however the University decides to strike this balance, it must do so consistently for all protected classes...

Source: <https://www.columbia.edu/content/report-4-task-force-antisemitism>.

Full Report #4 is at:

<https://ia600402.us.archive.org/9/items/2-final-hjaa-report.-the-soil-beneath-the-encampments/Columbia%20University%20Task%20Force%20on%20Antisemitism%20Report%204%20Dec%202025.pdf>.

Note: Report #4 refers to evidence collected for Report #2 which is at:

<https://ia600402.us.archive.org/9/items/2-final-hjaa-report.-the-soil-beneath-the-encampments/Columbia%20Report-2-Task-Force-on-Antisemitism.pdf>.

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